Summary of Dissertation Recitals

by

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ABSTRACT

The DMA dissertation recitals are comprised of two parts. The first recital represents the "breadth" of my doctoral studies with works selected from the German/French repertoire prior to the 20th century. The second and final lecture recitals represent the "depth," with four works by Beethoven that are the start of a long-term complete sonata cycle.

Recital 1: German & French Masterworks – solo works

Sunday, January 29, 2019, 7:00 PM, Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall, University of Michigan. Program: *Moments musicaux* D. 780, Franz Schubert; *Variations sérieuses* op. 54, Felix Mendelssohn; Partita no. 2 C Minor BWV 826, Johann Sebastian Bach; *L'isle joyeuse*, Claude Debussy.

Recital 2: Early and Middle Period Beethoven

Thursday, March 28, 2020, 7:00 PM, Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall, University of Michigan. Program: Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor op. 2 no. 1, Andante favori WoO 57, Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major op. 53 "Waldstein," Ludwig van Beethoven.

Recital 3: The Unsung Cantata: Beethoven's Op. 110 as a German religious cantata.

Monday, December 2, 2019, 7:30 PM, Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall, University of Michigan. Program: Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major op. 110, Ludwig van Beethoven.

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM

Mi-Eun Kim, Piano

Sunday, January 29, 2019
Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall
7:00 PM

Moments musicaux D. 780 — Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
- Moderato
- Andantino
- Allegretto moderato
- Moderato
- Allegro vivace
- Allegretto

Variations sérieuses op. 54 — Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Intermission

Partita no. 2 C Minor BWV 826 — Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
- Sinfonia
- Allemande
- Courante
- Sarabande
- Rondeaux
- Capriccio

L'isle joyeuse — Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM NOTES

Six moments musicaux D. 780

This set of six pieces may seem like a grouping of 'miniatures,' without a unifying thesis. They were not brought together haphazardly; the movement order does not reflect the order of composition, for example, the last movement Allegretto was the first to be composed. What then unites these tableaux? Are they similar in form? Aside from the second movement, they all follow an A-B-A' form. The second movement is the longest with a sort of A-B-A'-B'A" – it's not ternary, nor a rondo in the strict sense. Are there motivic, thematic connections then? Not necessarily. Each of the moments are sometimes performed separately, but not without the feeling of being a little orphaned on the program. The *six moments musicaux* also share a kinship with the *Impromptus* D. 899, D. 935 and the posthumously published *Drei Klavierstücke*. If there is anything that should pique the listener's interest, it is the completeness of style within each moment and the degree of contrast between the outer and inner sections. Shifts between the inner and outer sections, major to minor keys are often unprepared. These juxtapositions occur in every movement, and they are characteristic of Schubert's ability to shift moods and keys in an almost improvisatory manner. Pianist Alfred Brendel's description of Beethoven to an architect, and Schubert to a sleepwalker is particularly apt for this set. [1]

[1] Brendel, A. (1990). *Musical thoughts & afterthoughts*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

The first movement is a ternary form with the inner section containing another ternary form. A yodeling motif is shared between the larger sections, with its own echo folded into the design. We hear the sectional divisions through changes in key and part-writing. The second movement shows Schubert's inimitable understanding of the layers that lie between the sad and the tragic. The return of the F-sharp minor in reiteration of the B section plumbs the depth of some unknown loss or pain. None of the other movements come close to this level of despair. The third movement provides a fresh change of scenery. The rollicking left-hand eighths mimics the steady gait of horse hooves, a gentler version than the frantic gallop of *Erlkönig* and the ferocity of the fifth movement. The fourth movement seems to continue and elaborate on the third's gait in the left hand and a perpetuum mobile in the right. The middle portion of this movement yields the highest contrast. The C-sharp minor opening key turns into its enharmonic parallel mode, D-flat major. The shift is sudden and unprepared with the steady eighths are replaced with a constant syncopation and hesitation. The last few measures revisit the middle section with the parallel major and minors each quoted for two measures. The final movement is like a minuet and trio. It begins tunefully in A-flat major which undergoes a sudden transformation before the middle section. An enharmonic spelling of the F-flat results in a few measures of E major. It is both a surprising turn of events as well as a structural "musical moment" in itself. There may be some key characteristics at play. A-flat major is a four-flat key signature and E major is a four-sharp key signature – they can be considered complementary keys; the sharper the key, the hotter and brighter and the flatter the key, the cooler and shinier. We know that Beethoven often pitted these two keys together, such as in the rondo finale of the Emperor concerto and first movement of Op. 110. This movement was the first to be sketched, and the enharmonic shift is a commonality found within other movements.

Variations sérieuses op. 54

18th century composers nominally used variation sets for pedagogical purposes or ongoing anthologies of variation procedures that could be published continuously. Composers churned out variations of popular tunes, and soon the genre was overpopulated with mediocre works that were soon forgotten save for the occasional Haydn and Mozart variation set. Beethoven's Op. 34 and 35 variation sets appeared in 1802 with the tagline "written in a new manner," redeeming the genre from its trivial origins. Future sets such as the *32 Variations in C minor* and the late *Diabelli Variations* cemented his devotion and elevation of the form. In 1841, Mendelssohn's *Variations sérieuses* carries the torch first lit by Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, last handled by Beethoven. His contribution to the genre begins with the title, underlining his allegiance to both Bach and Beethoven. It is an original theme that remains recognizable throughout the subsequent variation treatments. Traditional procedures such as rhythmic diminution, alternating hands, contrasting texture, articulation, parallel modes and a coda are all intact. Some variations evoke Bach's two-part Inventions, but the pacing (sometimes continuous, sometimes abrupt) is Beethovenian in temperament. The theme and 17 variations run the gamut of Baroque, Classical and Romantic styles. It is at times symphonic, string quartet-like or a showcase of keyboard virtuosity. The last few variations and the coda make the piece seem endlessly expansive but it clocks in at just eleven minutes. While it is not particularly forward-looking, it is a true synthesis of tradition and Mendelssohn's individual expressivity.

Partita no. 2 C Minor BWV 826

The Partitas are the last of the harpsichord suites that follow the earlier English and French Suites and were the first to be published together in the *Clavier-Übung* I in 1731 under

Bach's supervision. These suites are a collection of dance movements, unlike the earlier works more freely chosen and of differing variety. While the English suites all began with a prelude and all the French suites begin with the Allemande, each of the six Partitas had a different kind of opening movement: Praeludium, Sinfonia, Fantasia, Ouvertüre, Praeambulum, and Toccata. The traditional movements Allemande, Courante and Sarabande are all intact and unified in this Partita by a similar heightened level of lyricism.

The Second Partita's *Sinfonia* is divided into three parts. It opens with a slow introduction, a dialogue between orchestra tutti and section with dotted rhythms that epitomize the French overture style handed down from Lully. The contrasting lyrical aria that follows is not unusually found in a French overture. Written as if for an oboe/soprano and basso continuo, it is steeped in melancholy and dramatic in length. It traverses into fantasy territory with highly ornamented chord progressions, i.e. a written-out cadenza that leads into a brisk, two-voice fugue. The French overture in the form of dotted rhythms returns just as the movement closes, book-ending the opening movement. The *Allemande* seems to be solely derived from the unfolding gesture of the descending 7-note motif. The intertwining layers between the voices demonstrate a more staid, refined movement. The *Courante* shows off the deftness of imagined footwork as its name 'courir' suggests. A simplified double was composed especially for this Sarabande so that Bach's version served as the ornamented repeat. The origin of the Sarabande as an old, slow dance in three is well known, but underneath the generality of the style is a unique set of harmonic rhythmic pattern that Bach fashioned for each Sarabande. The *Rondeau* is an exercise of precise symmetry, where 8-bars of the refrain alternate with an 8-bar couplet that varies in character, style and rhythmic pattern that grows in complexity. Aside from the French Overture BWV 831, the concluding Capriccio is the only one in a Bach keyboard suite that is not

a gigue. There is continuous imitative counterpoint like a fugue, without the strictness. The form evokes the gigue with the first half concluding in a half cadence that is then inverted in the second half. Like the title suggests, the main theme is thrown every which way at first, then meandering in some sequential passage, as if distancing itself from the neatness of the preceding Rondeau.

L'isle joyeuse

After returning to Paris from Rome, Debussy re-embraced a life of poverty and the bohemian life, giving private lessons to get by and continuing to compose his way to new avenues and perspectives. He rediscovered the poet Paul Verlaine, then Stefan Mallarmé and Baudelaire who all came from a generation that broke from the norm, and started to question conventions. These pre-Symbolists and Symbolist poets enjoyed the sonority and musicality of words, rejected symmetry in favor of uneven lines, feminine endings, thus creating a quiet revolution within poetry. Their works became "un-analyzable" in conventional, academic terms. The movement's desire was to create a "state of the soul" by the sound and meaning of the words – by rejecting traditional symmetry, and using uneven lines.

This is the headspace that Debussy was in when composing perhaps the first truly modern piece, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* in 1894. By the time he came to write *Suite bergamesque* and what turned into *L'isle joyeuse*, which was completed in 1903 and revised by the summer of 1904,[2] we see a seasoned composer who has achieved coherence in his style. The piece is often introduced with reference to his personal life (he had just started an affair with his soon to be second wife, Emma Bardac) and the pair of Jean-Antoine Watteau's paintings *L'Embarquement de Cythère.* While biographical events and references to a visual work are

[2] Debussy, Claude. "L'isle joyeuse" Preface by François Lesure. Munich: G. Henle Verlag 1986.

useful, they can distract and even perpetuate the misunderstood association between Debussy and Impressionism. As a self-identifying Symbolist, Debussy and the movement tried to go beyond what immediately seizes the eyes (i.e., Impressionism), and forego a linear narrative littered with conventions in favor of communicating a deeper hidden reality. Symbolists constantly experimented with their respective mediums, word and sound, in order to capture how one's inner life interprets what your eyes see and your senses feel. The subsequent work of art would then point to what is just underneath the surface of perception.

With *L'isle joyeuse*, his longest piece for piano, Debussy creates emotional shape and meaning, and achieves a climax while circumventing traditional compositional methods. The melody is more of a motive that is always being renewed and growing. It is constantly moving and in a fluid state while changing chords enhance its tonal ambiguity. Both harmony and rhythm are aspects of the melody and remain subordinate to the melody. Debussy was not interested in the tension-building effects of chords, rather seeking how sonorous, evocative and atmospheric they could be. There is not one prescribed way of feeling the tension of a chord, but a sensual thrill to each chord. Debussy pursues this thrill to the end of the piece, as the opening trill and flourish motive climbs higher and grows louder until it becomes a frenzy of sound and vibration. The last measure is almost incomprehensible, a rapturous event that exceeds the boundaries of what we can see and hear. Then, in a blink of an eye or the ear, it vanishes.

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM

Mi-Eun Kim, Piano

Thursday, March 28, 2020
Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall
7:00 PM

Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor op. 2 no. 1 — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro
Adagio
Menuetto
Prestissimo

Andante favori in F Major WoO 57 — Ludwig van Beethoven

Intermission

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major op. 53 "Waldstein" — Ludwig van Beethoven

Allegro
Introduzione. Adagio molto
Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM NOTES

Piano Sonata no. 1 in F Minor, op. 2 no. 1 (Composed 1795)

In 1792, young Ludwig van Beethoven had relocated to Vienna, taking up compositional studies with Franz Joseph Haydn and Johann Georg Albrechtsberger all the while trying to establish himself as both a formidable pianist and composer. He gave his first public performance (Akademie) in Vienna on March 29, 1795 and soon became widely known for his virtuosic ability to improvise at the keyboard. Beethoven capitalized on his newfound fame and rapidly published 20 of his 32 sonatas over a period of just 10 years. The first three piano sonatas of the Opus 2 set were dedicated to his mentor, Franz Joseph Haydn.

The Op. 2 No. 1sonata is by all accounts and analyses, highly unusual. It surpasses any ambitions Mozart or Haydn had for the piano and the genre, thus confirming Beethoven's singular commitment to the genre. The first movement's exposition begins with a Mannheim rocket, an ascending arpeggio that covers over the span of the octave. While this virtuosic device was used by other composers, (most famously Mozart's G minor Symphony), Beethoven integrates this with other motifs and processes them through modally ambiguous modulations. Throughout the piece we can see the young composer grappling with expectations and delivering his own unique take. He employs devices that he would later become known for: dissonance, chromaticism, sforzandos and an incessant rhythmic drive.

Andante favori in F Major, WoO 57 (Composed 1803-4)

Early on during his Viennese career, Beethoven performed frequently as a pianist at aristocratic salons. His primary audience consisted of members of high society as well as the musical elite, the *Kenner*. His secondary audience were the amateurs, the *Liebhaber*; mostly young Viennese ladies who took singing and piano lessons as part of their pre-matrimonial curriculum. Beethoven was very aware of his growing role as a supplier for both types of musical consumers and demarcated accordingly when publishing his works. One trend that we see in the distinction between the Kenner and the Liebhaber extends among the gender lines. Among his works with opus numbers, a vast majority is dedicated to men. Smaller works without an opus designation, though they proved to be quite lucrative, were more frequently dedicated to women. As large public concerts were still a rarity in Vienna, Beethoven's performance repertoire were more often consisted of these smaller, less serious works such as variation sets, fantasias, songs and transcriptions.

Andante favori was originally conceived as the slow movement to the large sonata in C Major. But its hefty length (it clocks in at around nine minutes), led him to excise it and publish it separately. While unfit for a sonata, it was deemed suitable for sale as a salon-type piece. By all accounts he performed it frequently in these gatherings as the title "favored Andante" suggests.

There is an intriguing theory that the opening theme in *Andante favori* was composed for the oft-widowed Countess Josephine Deym (neé Brunszvik), who is considered by some historians to have been his "Immortal Beloved." Along with a letter addressed to her in 1805, Beethoven included a copy of the score with a note "your Andante." If we follow this theory, then the first four notes of the theme would fit the four syllables of her name 'Jo-se-phi-ne.'

Beethoven's *'Ich denke dein', Song with Variations for Keyboard Four Hands* WoO 74, was composed contemporaneously and dedicated to Josephine and her sister, Therese Brunsvik.

Piano Sonata no. 21 in C Major, op. 53 ("Waldstein") (Composed 1803-4)

Between the years 1791-1815, there were no less than 200 instrument makers within the city limits of Vienna, of which around 135 were keyboard builders. The fortepiano was not merely an instrument; it was an engineering marvel, fitted with the latest technology of woodworking and craftsmanship and a must-have item for Viennese music lovers. Keyboard makers constantly vied for Beethoven's endorsement, sending him instruments and he in turn sent requests for modifications along with brutally honest reviews. During his lifetime Beethoven owned 17 instruments including those made by Stein, Streicher (neé Stein), Walter, Jakesch, Moser, Erard, Vogel, Broadwood and Graf.

Competition between firms was cutthroat - not unlike modern day Silicon Valley. New models were regularly released with improved range, pedal and material. The fortepiano morphed and evolved into a larger, stronger, louder instrument over a relatively short period of time. Builders had their own area of expertise and innovation that would later be combined into the modern piano build and mechanism. The Augsburg based Andreas Stein perfected the knee-lever that simultaneously lifted the dampers from the strings. The brothers Sebastian and Pierre Érard invented the double escapement mechanism that enabled pianists to repeat notes rapidly. Maria Anna "Nanette" Streicher made instruments that were personally preferred by both Mozart and Beethoven for their touch and lyricism.

In addition to technical improvements, Beethoven prioritized the instrument's range of expression, sensitivity to touch, dynamic range, tone and legato quality. In 1803 Beethoven

received an Érard, a larger instrument with a sturdier action than its Viennese counterparts. It was a forward-looking instrument as it replaced the knee lever with four pedals: the una corda, damper pedal, a lute stop and a moderator for softening the tone. The ease of the foot pedal design would later make the knee-lever obsolete. The finale of this work experiments with this new innovation. Beethoven marks the first-ever extensive and detailed pedal marking to convey a long, sustained sound. The resulting effect can be felt just as freshly today as it did then. It is not merely a gimmick, a demonstration of the pedal's hold, but the creation of an iconic, purely pianistic sound. The pedaling technique is part and parcel to the identity of the rondo theme.

The "Waldstein" sonata is a hallmark example of Beethoven's middle period. It contains innovative key relationships (e.g. I-III-VI in the primary and secondary key areas in the first movement), demands more virtuosity from the performer (e.g. lengthy trills, arpeggios, and scales in the rondo finale) and in sheer size and duration of the first and last movements, can be considered a "super-sized" sonata. In fact, the original second movement would have extended the duration by another nine minutes. The editorial deftness of the late period is not yet in play; rather, this sonata is almost bursting at the seams. The work also acts as a cross section of the precise moment when Beethoven's exploration of the keyboard meets the expansion of the technological capabilities of the instrument. The dedication to Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein was not for the typical paid commission, whereby the dedicatee would have exclusive rights to a piece for an average period of six months before releasing it to a publisher. If he wasn't being paid to write this "grande sonata" with its own designated opus number, and the count had long since moved to London, what was the purpose of the dedication?

I'd like to venture a guess that Beethoven may have been taking stock of his humble beginnings in Bonn and his subsequent arrival in Vienna, when the count gifted him his first

Andreas Stein fortepiano back in 1788. Both fortepianos and Beethoven had come a long way since their respective youths. Both the instrument and artist had gone through countless layers of trials, experimentation, development and growth. Perhaps Beethoven was purposefully marking his own “middle period,” or rather, a “growth period” by acknowledging the person that helped start the journey.

RECITAL 3 PROGRAM

Mi-Eun Kim, Piano

Monday, December 2, 2019
Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall
7:30 PM

The Unsung Cantata: Beethoven's Op. 110 as a German religious cantata.

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, op. 110 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
Allegro molto
Adagio ma non troppo
Arioso dolente
Fuga. Allegro ma non troppo

RECITAL 3 PROGRAM NOTES

**This is an edited transcript of the lecture recital.*

Good evening. Thank you for coming. I am very excited to share some thoughts on one of my favorite pieces, Beethoven's Op. 110 Sonata. Talking about this sonata and what it does is like trying to address all six sides of a cube at once. When dealing with a late work of a composer, we must first ask, what came before?

When we talk about a sonata, we talk about the form, what it contains and what it does to create an event-stream or narrative of the piece. Usually in a single movement, the 'typical' sonata procedure includes the following main components:

- The exposition where we are presented with the tonic key, primary theme(s), followed by transitional material that either modulates to the next key. A secondary theme usually in the dominant or relative major, or in a few cases in the mediant/submediant (e.g. Opp. 31/1, 53, 106) which serves as the tonal goal of the exposition. A clear series of cadences present a closing section that reinforces the new key.
- The development usually follows a repeat of the exposition. It uses sequences to travel to other more distant keys where individual motives, themes or a combination of them are processed until the music prepares for the return of the tonic key and primary theme via a dominant preparation

- In the recapitulation, the primary theme and Secondary theme are in the home key followed usuallyz by a coda that may address some unresolved issues presented earlier in the piece.

It's helpful to remember that these descriptions of sonata theory came after the fact. They were not rules that composers subscribed to during the compositional process. Sonata theory observes a general consensus, but factors such as time period, geographical location and individuality lead to a wide array of possibilities. Most of Beethoven's sonatas, even from his very first sets from Bonn, don't follow the typical sonata procedure.

In early classical sonatas, multi-movement sonata cycles prioritized the first movement. Subsequent movements were composed to complement the first in mood or key, though they rarely demonstrated an intertextuality and a larger architectural plan. One could swap out movements of sonatas by the same composer and hardly tell the difference.

Beethoven changed all of that. His late sonatas 1) do not follow a typical sonata form, 2) incorporate other music, references or symbols especially from the Baroque period, namely Bach and Händel 3) and are designed so that there is a strong integration of the piece as whole, both thematically and dramatically. Structural and dramatic unity are achieved not by coincidence, but through careful planning. None of its smaller parts could be taken out or replaced.

Some examples of "other music" found in previous Beethoven sonatas include:

- The recitative opening of the Tempest Sonata Op. 31 No. 2
- Orchestral effects in the Op. 26 funeral march
- Op. 109 first movement, which works like a bagatelle meets fantasy. The variation set in the third movement is modeled on J.S. Bach's Goldberg variations.

In Op. 110 the "other music" that you will hear are: a four-part chorale, two folk tunes, accompanied recitative and two pairs of Arioso-fugue and Arioso-inverted fugue.

When we think of fugues, we think of Bach. Before 1802, Beethoven modeled many of his pieces on Mozart and Haydn. In later years, he shifted his gaze from Mozart and Haydn to Bach and Händel. This shift from early/middle period to late period can be illustrated in the gradual replacement of rondo finales (e.g. Op. 13 "Pathetique" finale, Op. 53 "Waldstein" finale, all of the piano concerto final movements) with fugue finales. Many of his late works have fugues and fugato style, not only in small sections, but an entire movement and especially at the end of a multi-movement sonata.

Using fugues for finales is in line with Beethoven's continued innovations. This resulted in shifting the weight and significance from the first movement to the last movement, creating an end-driven or teleological work. A fugue at the end of the sonata signals that Beethoven is saving a complex compositional procedure that the piece is allowed the previous movements to lead up to it, tied together by both thematically and dramatically. The previous movements would then foreshadow and anticipate what was to come later in the piece.

In addition to the fugal finale, Beethoven connects other thematic elements throughout the sonata:

- Transformation of arpeggios. They do more than go up and down, or function as accompanying figures. Their placement in the transition of the first movement, in the 'developing recapitulation' and the trio of the second movement function as audible cues foreshadowing a new idea and perspective. Beethoven relies on arpeggiation for the final moments of finale in the coda to give both rhythmic drive that deliver a sense of transcendence.

- Fugal theme outlined in the opening melodic line. The fugue theme is found embedded in the inner voices of the first and last measures of the first movement. The scherzo theme is also a version of the Arioso dolente melody.
- Acoustical extremes. The highest note (C7), also the highest note on Beethoven's piano at the time, has its own journey throughout the piece. It is used sparingly in the first movement and then in the coda of the final movement its repetition depicts a kind of "breaking the glass ceiling" moment.

German Sacred Cantata

Bach's influence on this sonata is undeniable when it is examined through the lens of another older, sacred, vocal genre. The German sacred cantata comes from the Lutheran church's liturgical music. The most famous example is Bach's *Wachet auf ruft uns die Stimme* BWV 140. It is a multi-movement chamber and vocal work that featured a choir, soloists, a small orchestral ensemble and organ. It was usually sung before or after the sermon and it depicted scenes from the Bible and religious text. Cantatas varied in structure, but usually began with a chorale, followed by a recitative (a sung dialogue) followed by an aria for soloist and instrument. These three cantata elements: chorale, recitative and aria make up the "other music" in Op. 110.

Moderato

The opening is a four-part chorale written as if for four voices. Its simplicity belies the fact that it also contains the fugue theme in the soprano line, as well as in diminutive form. The ascending and descending arpeggios of the transition may seem like filigree but are thematically consequential and foreshadow the topography of both the second movement trio section and the post-fugue coda. Beethoven matches the character of the arpeggios with the character of each movement. Beethoven also uses extremities of the keyboard range using both very high and very

low notes. This is a general characteristic of his late period. The Op. 101 sonata in A Major heavily featured the new “contrabass E” in the recapitulation of the last movement. In Op. 110, the high C7 shows Beethoven reinforcing the heavenly, chorale-like, sacred setting.

The development section used to be the hallmark of a Beethoven sonata. In the middle period, development sections were often longer than the exposition, and very purposeful in the use of remote keys. However, the Op. 110development is shortened, only developing the opening two measures and not getting very far. This unusual restraint in the development section is another example of Beethoven saving the goods for later, not just in the movement’s coda, but at the end of the entire piece.

When the modulations in the development reach A-flat major, it sounds like a recapitulation, however the combination of the left hand arpeggios indicate that we are still developing. The voices exchanges and reach D-flat major until a modal change from D-flat major to C-sharp minor brings us to B-Major and E Major. An Enharmonic respelling of E Major to F-flat Major is the same as the flat-VI of A-flat Major. In theoretical terms, F-flat Major is correct, but composers were not in the habit of writing in such remote keys. An astute observer would note the absence of the F-flat and what it portends; it is the precise modal modification needed to make an A-flat melodic minor scale. Beethoven thus conceals his true intention with the key and pitch to both the reader and the listener.

In 18th century classical music, composers and writers of music imbued each key with its own set of expressive qualities. There are lists of keys and their ‘temperament,’ not unlike zodiac charts and tarot cards, but what matters is that Beethoven had his own set of images and words for keys and that his compositions operated under those conditions. For example, he is known to have called B minor “the black key.” This information in turn, should influence the performer

and possibly, the listener. While it is impossible to convert an entire concert hall into believing the same thing about a key, it is the performer's duty to show the stark contrasts and the minute subtleties by managing a system of ratios.

The choice of A-flat Major and E Major as the key areas of the Exposition and Recapitulation has structural underpinnings. If you imagine the circle of 5ths C has no key signature and is the pure key in the middle. On either side were E major with four sharps and A-flat major with four flats. In other words, the two keys are complementary, like the opposing pigments of a color wheel. In a general survey of the literature of key characteristics, E Major was described as "bright, uplifting and heavenly." A-flat Major was on the other hand viewed as the polar opposite: "dark and gloomy." It may seem foreign to our modern sensibilities that E Major was heard as the highest, sharpest, brightest key and A-flat Major was the lowest, flattest and darkest key. But a sampling of A-flat and F minor keys reveal that they were typically used for funeral marches and operatic dungeon scenes, even in Beethoven's repertoire. The ruling principal behind this school of 18th century thought lies in the number of open strings string players had access to in any key signature. Open strings created vibrated naturally, while stopped strings needed manual vibrato.

Following this detour to E Major/F-flat Major Beethoven returns from this tonal detour through three descending semitones and redirects the second theme in the A-flat's subdominant D-flat Major. However, Beethoven is not done with the F-flat just yet. It's appearance here is a sign "from above" if continuing this metaphor, of an issue to be later dealt. Indeed the coda of this movement and the slow movement and the coda of the final movement all deal with this F-flat in more ways than one.

Like the opening, the ending of the first movement contains references to the fugue theme and the F-flat. Here, the fugue theme is on the dominant E-flat and just as it's about to continue with the full theme statement it is interrupted by a diminished chord containing the "Tell-Tale F-flat."

Allegro molto

The second movement is a scherzo/trio in F minor and D-flat major, respectively. Coincidentally or not, these were the very keys that were glossed over in the first movement's development section. Beethoven veers drastically away from the mood of the first movement by incorporating "other music" in the form of two German folk tunes. The first folk melody of the scherzo is from the German folk tune,
"Unser Katz Katzchen ghabt" (trans. Our cat had kittens.) The second is part of a melody "Ich bin luderlich, du bist luderlich." (trans. I am slovenly, you are slovenly.) In the context of the German sacred cantata, this almost seems inappropriate, almost blasphemous in this work. Why does Beethoven do this and what role does the larger scherzo/trio movement play?

Beethoven often juxtaposes high and low art. The folk tunes represent the low art, offering a counterpart to the reaching of heaven in the first movement. The folk melodies are harmonized with chords. Also, the 2/4 time signature undermines the strength of the downbeat with upbeat gestures. He is showing a glimpse of his growing discontent for meter. There are continuous syncopations through rests as well as other the bar line. Future composers would solve these metric inconsistencies by switching meters frequently. It is another instance of a purposeful mistake, as untimely rests and inconvenient syncopations reappear in the *Arioso dolente*.

The second movement is a contradiction in terms of character, mood and material, but it still relates to the other movements. The difference in temperament and material is only superficial in

this late work. The contour of the scherzo melody is similar to the arioso melody and anticipates it. The piccardy 3rd at the coda is used again at the end of the second arioso. Syncopations through rests are foreshadowing something. The melody is still vocal, albeit anti-lyrical. Beethoven is indirectly juxtaposing the sacred and the secular.

Adagio ma non troppo

The third part of the sonata begins in *Adagio* as a recitative that strongly evoke those found in Bach's church cantatas. It is followed by an *Arioso dolente* (Song of Lament) in A-flat minor, which acts as a prelude to the fugue in A-flat Major. The recitative is not repeated, in the subsequent aria and fugue. Therefore, it serves as a structural departure from the first and second movements as well as an acoustic signal that something different is unfolding. It is telling us that we are leaving the traditional confines of the sonata.

The recitative section is not obviously quoting Bach, but a distillation of years of study and familiarity with Bach's works. Beethoven lingers on an unusually long A, which is notated as another reference to vocal writing. When sung it they would sustain it through a crescendo and diminuendo. This is called *Messa di voce* and it is an evocation of a vocal technique on a keyboard instrument. Beethoven layers this with another reference to a baroque keyboard instrument, the clavichord, which had the ability to create a vibrato effect while the player was holding down a single note. The finger rests gently on the key and without lifting you can wiggle it for a very soft vibrato. This keyboard vibrato is called *Bebung*. Beethoven further instructs the pianist with additional pedal markings: a long pedal with the *una cord*a lifting gradually to highlight the crescendo effect. The final recitative figure ends with a descending fourth and it could easily be completed with these four notes.

Arioso dolente – St. John's Passion

The outline of the Arioso melody is suspiciously similar to Bach's *St. John Passion* has a mournful aria on the text "es ist vollbracht." It is a sung response to Jesus' last words on the cross and is considered one of the most important moments of Christianity, second to the resurrection and therefore liturgical music. It cannot be a coincidence that Beethoven begins this Song of Lament on the tune of Es ist vollbracht.

The portending F-flat from the first movement reappears, except that while the Arioso is in A-flat minor, the key signature is not. This is another disconnect between the reader and the listener. As a side note this melody makes an appearance in an early Beethoven work, the Sonata for Cello and Piano op. 69 in A Major in the development of the first movement.

Fuga: Allegro

As the *Arioso* concludes, only the A-flat is left standing. Here, homophony makes way for polyphony with the fugue theme. Towards the end the fugue seems to reach through stretto but at the E-flat seventh chord, something happens. It is unable to go on. Instead, Beethoven strips away the theme, using only the harmony to shift it downward a half step to G minor, which continues downward to the low G.

The second Arioso is not a repeat of the first by any means. It is marked *Ermattet, klagend. Perdendo le forze, dolente*. (Trans. Weary, lamenting. Losing force, exhausted with grief.) The markings are descriptive of an even more heart-wrenching level of despair. The resolution was so close, but the music falls away. The music is both a psychological and emotional wreck. The *Arioso* melody reflects this as it gasps and weeps, as if unable to sing a full line of the melody.

Beethoven uses a similar moment in the Op. 130 string quartet V. Cavatina marked *Beklemmt*. (Trans. heavy at heart). The similarities in notation between these moments are great. The first violin and the soprano line have the same notations.

The dynamic markings of the second Arioso is more subdued. He writes more poco crescendos. And the ending is bare whimper. Similar to the end of the first arioso, it goes toward a cadence, as if towards the grave, its fate. Until…the same piccardy 3rd from the second movement. The slovenly character, that low, crass movement reveals its true nature. And we start with chords and the previous descent is redirected upwards to G major.

The Inversion

The inversion starts in G Major, the key of the leading tone, and the pitches move in the opposite direction of the original fugue theme. It is of the first fugue, but transformed. Bach's first biographer Forkel commented that an inversion of the fugue subject (*die Umkehrung)*[3] is not merely an inversion of pitch and direction but of expressive intent**.** If we apply the reading of Romantic irony and the notion of self-conciousness and self-reflexivity within a given work, we can interpret that the fugue seems to be re-evaluating itself. Following the entrance of the inverted subjects we expect an episode or sequence. Instead, we see simultaneous diminution and augmentation, then a double diminution of an incomplete subject. Beethoven is making the music literally faster and slower. Augmentation and diminution are typical counterpoint procedures, but Beethoven combines them to confront and indeed, create an ending. In addition to the simultaneity of diminution and augmentation, he adds another element, tempo and the manipulation of time itself. At the start of the inversion there are bilingual instructions in Italian and German. Here, Beethoven is micromanaging both the instruction and the execution.

[3] David, H. T., Mendel, A., & Wolff, C. (1999). *The new Bach reader: A life of Johann Sebastian Bach in letters and documents*. New York: W.W. Norton

- *L'istesso tempo della Fuga, poi a poi di nuovo vivente*. (trans. The same tempo as the fugue, little by little with new life).
- *Poi a poi tutte le corde*. (trans. Little by little, lift the una corda)
- (On the double diminution), *Meno allegro. Etwas langsamer*. (trans. A little slower.)
- *Nach und nach wieder geschwinder,* (trans. Little by little, faster again.)

At the end of this, the diminution and augmentation convergences to the return of the original fugue in A-flat Major at Tempo Primo.

The great tempo debate

In 1996, pianist Alfred Brendel and scholar Charles Rosen engaged in a public debate about interpreting Beethoven's words on this page in the letters section of *The New York Review of Books.* In response to Rosen's "Beethoven's Triumph" article, Brendel writes:

> "I am sorry to say it, but Charles Rosen's reading of Beethoven's indication for the second fugue in op. 110 "L'istesso tempo della Fuga—poi a poi di nuovo vivente—nach und nach wieder auflebend" remains a misreading. If Beethoven would have meant to call for "a gradual acceleration," which according to Rosen he did, he would have made it clear in different wording: as "poi a poi sempre più allegro" (op. 111), or, perhaps, as "poi a poi più vivente." The key word in his indication is "di nuovo" ("wieder"). The piece gets back to life, rather than adding further life. "Gradually reviving" is a psychological clue, borne out by everything that happens in the music. The performer should not hesitate to react to it, and add some dynamics within the una corda range."[4] – Alfred Brendel

In other words, Brendel argues that "nuovo vivente/new life" is a description of what is happening on the page, the liquidation of events through diminution and augmentation. In his recording[5], he stretches out and slows down the eighth notes just before the *Meno allegro* and double diminution in order to fit the 16th notes into the preceding eighth note values. This performance is a literal reading of the notations.

[4] Brendel, A., & Rosen, C. (February 1, 1996). Getting Back to Life. *The New York Review of Books, XLIII*(2).
[5] Brendel, A. *Ludwig van Beethoven Complete Sonatas & Concertos CD 9* (1970-77) [CD-ROM] Decca Music Group Limited, London, England.

Here is the reply from Rosen:

> It is absurd to insist that "the same tempo as the fugue—little by little getting back to life again" cannot be read as a demand for a slight and gradual quickening of the tempo, particularly since the page in question involves transforming the main theme, played twice as slow, back eventually into the original tempo. Alfred Brendel's reading is the traditional one, and I do not foolishly claim that if Beethoven had wanted his indication to mean an increase in dynamics, he ought to have specified that more clearly by writing "poi a poi più forte."

Contrarily, Charles Rosen takes the first marking "same tempo as the fugue, little by little with new life" as the performer should begin in the tempo of the fugue, then as the music proceeds, play it with very gradual increase of animation.

As a demonstration, I will play the same passage three different ways:

1. No meno allegro.
2. Brendel's meno allegro. He prioritizes the diminution in 16^{th} notes to sound slower than the preceding eighth notes.
3. With tempo modulation. Prioritizing the transformation of the augmentation theme at half tempo gradually into the original effect. This is the dramatic effect of adding new life and vigor. Therefore, the meno allegro is not a change of tempo, where all of a sudden things are slower. It is a change in notation.

We can surmise that Beethoven had trouble notating the rhythm of the passage in order to effectively communicate what he wanted. The challenge for the pianist is to interpret what Beethoven meant with all of these words in conjunction with the fugal procedures of diminution and augmentation. Today, this would be called "tempo modulation" sometimes called "metric modulation" where there is a shift from one tempo to where the note value of the first is made the same as the note value of the second. The key to making this work is to gradually accelerate the tempo and the diminutions and quickened sixteenths will help and when they are cut off, to quicken the eighth notes so that they become the new sixteenth note.

The Ending

Once the tempo and fugue are restored it restarts again. Three voices enter, but this time it is accompanied by broken arpeggios that seem to be a combination of the 1st movement arpeggios and the 2nd movement descending line. We have heard this fugue before and it seems to remember what it went through previously. This newly revived fugue turns away from stretto, diminution and even counterpoint and transforms into homophony, greeting that old friend the F-flat and flings itself as far away as possible. The rhythmic energy of the sixteenth notes are descending but not into despair, it's illustrating growth, expansion, and it highlights the spiral ascent of the right hand which at first uses the ascending fourths, to climb and climb until it finally reaches that high C. After that, the fugue is gone but the energy is retained through the tumble of A-flat major arpeggios and continues beyond itself.

This sonata uses the dramatic qualities of a German sacred cantata and Beethoven's teleological compositional process to accomplish something quite extraordinary, a piece that started from humble beginnings and after much trial and tribulation, is revived and liberated from itself.

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